



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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March 11, 2004

OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK300-4-7

SUBJECT: LTP – Environmental Quality Incentives Programs (EQIP) Statewide Irrigation Water Conservation Funding Pool and Applicable Ranking Criteria

Purpose: To provide field offices with ranking criteria and guidance for accepting applications for irrigation water conservation measures for FY 2004 EQIP.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2004

FINAL ACTION REQUIRED BY JULY 1, 2004

The 2002 Farm Bill included a specific section in the EQIP providing for specific funding for groundwater and surface water conservation (GSWC) measures. In 2002, the allocation was nationally targeted to the High Plains region of the United States which includes Oklahoma's three panhandle counties and parts of five other counties. Due to the limited allocation, the significance of the Ogallala aquifer, concentration of irrigation practices, and the backlog of applications, the targeting of the funding was continued in 2003. Oklahoma's 2004 allocation in the GSWC funding of EQIP remains insufficient to address the resource needs and application backlog in the High Plains counties.

The State Technical Committee recommended offering ground and surface water conservation funding statewide. This will provide other irrigators an opportunity for cost-share assistance to increase system efficiency and provide for water savings. Therefore, a limited statewide application and funding process (exclusive of the High Plains Area) will be added to the fiscal year 2004 EQIP to address this concern. An allocation of \$350,000 has been set-aside to fund irrigation water conservation applications statewide. These funds will be available only for existing irrigation systems and cannot be used to bring new land under irrigation. The water conservation and irrigation eligibility requirements of EQIP are as follows.

- The land must have been irrigated two (2) of the five (5) years previous to application for EQIP.
- Conservation measures applied through the EQIP must result in a net water savings to the operating unit.

The \$760,500 in GSWC funding will remain targeted to the High Plains region. Applicants from the High Plains area will be evaluated and ranked separately and will not compete for these funds. The application evaluation criteria for High Plains Aquifer (GSWC) will continue unchanged from 2003. Refer to bulletin OK300-4-5 for the allocation distribution and field office requirements for the GSWC funding.

Field offices will need to begin advertising the availability of these funds immediately. A sample press release, suitable for local adaptation, may be found at the following website:

<http://intranet.ok.nrcs.usda.gov/PGM/stwide04/IrrWaterConsPress.doc>

Through the continuous sign-up process, applications for the statewide EQIP irrigation water conservation assistance may be accepted immediately and evaluated using the attached statewide irrigation water conservation evaluation criteria. Applications received by June 1, 2004, will be evaluated and entered into ProTracts using the "Statewide GSWC" fund code at least five (5) days prior to, **but no later than July 1, 2004**. All applications will be forwarded to FSA within five (5) days of receipt by NRCS for producer eligibility determinations and entry into the System 36. The FSA fund code for these applications will be 409999/2004. Applications received after June 1, 2004, will continue to be entered into ProTracts for eventual promotion and possible funding in the future. Funded applications will be selected exclusively from a statewide ranking list of those entered in ProTracts. Field offices will be notified of successful applicants for contract development. Appropriate allocations to field offices will be provided in ProTracts to cover the development and obligation of these contracts. As with all EQIP program activities, District Conservationists will need to make sure the funds are available at the local FSA Office before attempting to obligate funds.

The list of eligible conservation practices is limited to the following. Average costs, cost-share rates, and incentive payments are included on the current statewide EQIP cost list.

324 – Deep Tillage	430EE – Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline, Low-Pressure, Underground, Plastic*
328 – Conservation Crop Rotation	441 – Irrigation System, Microirrigation
329A – Residue Management, No till and Strip till	442 – Irrigation System, Sprinkler*
329B – Residue Management, Mulch till	449 – Irrigation Water Management
329C – Residue Management, Ridge till	511 – Forage Harvest Management
332 – Contour Buffer Strips	512 – Pasture and Hayland Planting
340 – Cover Crop	516 – Pipeline
351 – Well Decommissioning	528A – Prescribed Grazing
380 – Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	533 – Pumping Plant*
382 – Fence	550 – Range Seeding
386 – Field Border	590 – Nutrient Management
393 – Filter Strip	603 – Herbaceous Wind Barriers
422 – Hedgerow Planting	612 – Tree/shrub Establishment
430DD – Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline, High-Pressure, Underground, Plastic*	614 – Watering Facility

*No new systems, limited to conversion of an existing system

Field offices should refer to bulletin OK-300-4-5 for additional guidance regarding EQIP allocation management. Questions concerning this information should be forwarded to the appropriate Zone Program Liaison or Programs Staff member.

/s/ Kevin D. Norton, Acting For

M. DARREL DOMINICK
State Conservationist

Attachments